28: Spiro--141 [2] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 764, 801 Ifalik

"After the burial, a number of taboos and practices are observed by the family of the deceased. The 'pall bearers' may not sleep in their own homes, but must sleep in the house of the deceased for four days. (4) Their food is prepared on a separate fire, and they may neither take from nor give another a light. Talemera, for example, would not share the cigarettes I had given him with Woromai, after it had been lit, because the latter had been a pall bearer. This taboo on the sharing of fire seems to be true of members of the family as well. Tom refused to light the cigarette of Novogopok, the mother of the man who had died, during the mourning period: 'I am afraid dead man,' for he might make him ill."

"4. Four is the sacred number in Ifaluk. Almost all abstention taboos, as well as any other acts of supernatural import involve the number 4."

41: Bates & Abbott N-5 (1953) 1958
OR21 Woleai OR21
Ifaluk

corpse is wrapped in seemingly endless coils of rope, weighted with stones, and taken out to sea for burial. The canoe used for this then cannot be touched for four days, four being in general the magic number on Ifaluk.

The alus, the spirits of the dead, are sometimes benevolent and sometimes malevolent, apparently depending on the character of the person from whom they came. The malevolent spirits cause all sorts of trouble, including most kinds of illness. Mel Spiro, in his psychological studies of the Ifalukians, found fear of alus to be dominating both consciously and subconsciously. We had no encounters with alus, but we didn't seek any, and the attitude toward alus of the young men who worked with us seemed to be largely ritual, but we did not try to probe into their psychology.

In theory the dances, then, were designed to please the alus, both the high gods and the ordinary spirits. The elaborate ur dances which required these endless nightly rehearsals, were surely for the high gods; but all of the alus, like all of the people, must have enjoyed them. The rehearsals finally ended in the big show, which was held on July 22nd, at midday in the schoolhouse clearing.

Don and I were off taking advantage of a low tide to work on profiles of the reef when a messenger came to tell us the dance was about to start. When we got there the men had already formed into a line along the north margin of the clearing. They were all dressed up, with bows of the ivory-like unfolded coconut leaves on arms and legs, with coconut-leaf skirts over loin-cloths, with necklaces of flowers and of the greenish-ivory coconut leaves, with garlands of flowers, and surmounting all, a block of pith over the forehead, wrapped in red paper and tinfoil (from cigarette packages) and bearing a cluster of tall white feathers (perhaps from the fairy terns; but more probably and prosaically from chickens). Faces were marked with red turmeric, a streak of red along the jawline, and dabs on the cheeks and arms.

They put on a fine show. Some of the pieces were songs or chants, with an accompaniment of stamping and clapping. Others involved more complicated gesturings and posturings. In one, two men standing with outstretched arms pantomimed man-of-war birds—tilting, soaring and gliding—while the rest knelt facing each other, chanting the